

Moniz-Carroll, Rhonda

From: Heather Whaley <hbwhaley@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 11, 2015 9:06 AM
To: JudTestimony
Subject: HB 6962

In September of 2013, my son went to a friend's house to play. The parents rented the home, and there was a barn on the property owned by the landlord. The kids were told not to go in, but over the course of a few heavy winters, the door had become unlocked, and there were multiple open windows, so access to the barn was very easy. A group of kids playing tag see a bunch of busted windows and a great place to hide. Inside the barn, along with very dangerous farming equipment, there was a hunting rifle just laying right out in the open. My son's friend, who was always taught never to touch a gun, and was raised by parents who take guns very seriously, but nevertheless a curious 12-year-old boy, picked it up and was pretending to shoot it through a hole in the back of the barn, facing the woods. He fired the gun about fifty times out the window, and it appeared to be empty. He turned to my son and said, "You should feel the air that comes out of the nozzle." He then turned to my son, who was about three feet away, aimed the rifle at his heart and pulled the trigger. It made my son's shirt move.

My son yelled at his friend to put it down. As the boy went to drop it on the shelf, my son turned to leave, and a random bullet ejected from the gun and shot through his arm, just missing his ulnar artery, by a hair. He underwent a five-hour surgery with Dr. Fish in Brookfield, one of the top orthopedic surgeons in the state. Dr. Fish said it was the most difficult surgery of his career. He emerged, sweating, and told us he wasn't sure he would be able to remove the bullet, given that it had lodged so closely to sensitive areas. Had he not been able to remove the bullet, my son's arm would not have grown and it would have caused major damage later to his veins, ligaments and muscles. Had the bullet left the gun the last time it was fired, my son would be dead.

My son was traumatized both physically and emotionally. For weeks following the shooting, he was lectured by teachers, friends, and parents that he shouldn't have been playing with guns. It was hard for him to explain that he wasn't playing with guns. He doesn't like guns. He never has, he detests all violence. It's not in his nature.

I support 1000% HB 6962 requiring the safe storage of all guns. Every police officer we spoke with following my son's shooting told us the same thing – you always assume a gun is loaded, regardless of what you are told. Just because a gun is not loaded, doesn't mean that there isn't a chance there is a bullet randomly lodged somewhere. All guns, loaded and unloaded should be safely locked up.

Kathleen Twomey

Redding, CT